

**FEDERAL AID
INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game
State Wildlife Grant**

Grant Number: T-23 **Segment Number: 2**

Project Number: 1.0

Project Title: Identifying, Prioritizing, and Conserving Important Bird Areas in Alaska

Project Duration: July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2014

Report Period: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Report Due Date: September 1, 2013

Principle Investigator: Melanie Smith

Project Location: Statewide

I. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS FOR LAST SEGMENT PERIOD ONLY

Objectives:

I. Conserve Alaska's Birdlife

1. Identify Important Bird Areas (IBAs)

1.1) With partners, identify existing bird survey data sets of suitable quality.

Accomplishments: During our second year of this project we continued acquiring and compiling coastal and terrestrial databases of waterfowl surveys, which were provided primarily by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We also acquired additional datasets with the help of the Alaska Natural Heritage Program, including survey data collected by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Alaska Bird Observatory, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This includes data from aerial transects, lake, river, and coastline surveys, point counts, and road surveys, and supplements our previously collected waterfowl information with a rich dataset for raptors, shorebirds, and songbirds. In total, we now have almost one million bird observation points we can use for identifying IBAs around the state. We began work consolidating these disparate data types into a common format, so that these can be analyzed together, and will complete this work in the third year of the project, between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

1.2) Use GIS tools to create a map showing distribution of bird survey effort statewide.

Accomplishments: Continuing from last year's work to identify pelagic and colony IBAs, this year we began developing methods for analyzing coastal and terrestrial data. We also developed

methods for identifying marine populations of continental and state importance. We have drafted the methods and analysis and finish developing this during the third year of our project, between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

- 1.3) Use GIS tools to identify, delineate, and map IBAs statewide, and refine boundaries of existing IBAs, as needed. Develop an interactive, web-based map of IBAs.

Accomplishments: This year we incorporated the IBAs identified in the first year of this project into our previously existing IBA network. We completed development of an interactive, web-based map of marine IBAs, which will be released early in the third year of this grant. This map allows users to view photos and descriptions for hundreds of marine IBAs from Alaska to Mexico, and to identify IBAs by state, type, or species. During the second year of this project we made significant progress in identifying coastal and terrestrial IBAs, as well as state and continental-level marine IBAs. We have completed draft results for IBAs of these types, and will finalize these in the third year of our project.

- 1.4) Submit nominated IBAs to BirdLife International or WHSRN for formal recognition. This will be coordinated with the Alaska Shorebird Group prior to making any submissions.

Accomplishments: Early this year we nominated the IBAs identified in the first year in this project, and shared these results with BirdLife International. We then worked to refine the information included in this nomination by compiling information on additional species of state, continental, and global importance in the nominated areas. We have not yet submitted coastal or terrestrial IBAs, or state/continental-level marine IBAs, but we will do so during the third year of our project, between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

2. Assess and Prioritize Important Bird Areas

- 2.1) Develop a scoring metric to capture the biological values, threats, and vulnerabilities of each IBA.

Accomplishments: This year we developed preliminary methods for scoring our IBAs based on multiple criteria. This resulted in a spreadsheet that prioritized all of Alaska's IBAs (as of early 2013). We generated a report describing the ecological values and conservation status of the top ten terrestrial IBAs in the state. We will complete an updated prioritization analysis in the third year of our grant period, from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, following the completion of IBA identification for marine, coastal, and terrestrial sites.

- 2.2) Describe priority IBAs by Bird Conservation Region (BCR), and by inland, coastal, and offshore domains.

Accomplishments: This work is planned for the third year of our grant period, from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, following the completion of data compilation and IBA identification for marine, coastal, and terrestrial sites.

3. Plan Conservation Actions

- 3.1) Write a conservation action plan for the highest priority IBA in each BCR, including at least 1 IBA from each domain.

Accomplishments: This work is planned for the third year of our grant period, from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, following the completion of data compilation, IBA identification, and prioritizing sites for conservation.

II. PUBLICATIONS

Reports:

Audubon Alaska. 2012. Conservation Planning for Alaska's Important Bird Areas. Audubon Alaska, Anchorage, AK.

Smith, M., N. Walker, C. Free, M. Kirchhoff, N. Warnock, A. Weinstein, T. Distler, and I. Stenhouse. 2012. Marine Important Bird Areas in Alaska: Identifying Globally Significant Sites Using Colony and At-sea Survey Data. Audubon Alaska, Anchorage, AK.

Oral Presentation:

Smith, M., N. Walker, M. Kirchhoff, and C. Free. 2013. Mapping Important Areas for Seabirds: How to Draw the Boundary Line. *In* Pacific Seabird Group Annual Conference. Portland, OR.

Poster Presentation:

Smith, M., N. Walker, C. Free, M. Kirchhoff, N. Warnock, and I. Stenhouse. 2013. Marine Important Bird Areas in Alaska. *In* Pacific Seabird Group Annual Conference. Portland, OR.

Smith, M., N. Walker, C. Free, M. Kirchhoff, N. Warnock, A. Weinstein, T. Distler, and I. Stenhouse. 2012. Marine Important Bird Areas in Alaska: Global sites for conservation. *In* 15th Alaska Bird Conference. Anchorage, AK.

Peer-reviewed Journal:

Smith, M. A., N. J. Walker, C. M. Free, M. J. Kirchhoff, G. S. Drew, N. D. Warnock, and I. J. Stenhouse. in review. Identifying marine important bird areas using at-sea survey data. *Biological Conservation* 00:00-00.

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